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NRO REVIEW COMPLETED

17 August 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director of Science and Technology
SUBJECT: COMOR Relations with NRO

1. After a thorough search of Jim Reber's files and the COMOR minutes going as far back as April 1962, I am able to come up with a few instances of NRO procrastination and non-cooperation which can be documented.

2. I have also done some brain picking locally but it has not been too lucrative. In the last analysis, Jim is the only one I would trust to give an off-the-cuff resume in any kind of formal memorandum going to the Director. However, based on a fairly lengthy experience in COMOR, my general feeling is that the tendencies to be jurisdictionally jealous, to counter a request for information with a demand for specific requirements, and to be unnecessarily upstage in exaggerating security aspects have all plagued us since the beginning of our relationship. Most of these characteristics are clearly reflected in the NRO reply to USIB on D-13.

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This document contains information referring to Project ARGON

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COMOR Relations with NRO

Comments on NRO Reply to D-13

1. The general impression gained from reading Dr. McMillan's 12 August memorandum, "Intelligence Requirements for Satellite Collection," is that it is unnecessarily belligerent, belabors jurisdictional problems, and fails to give much guidance to COMOR in taking the next step. Although it took 6 weeks for this answer, it did take COMOR 3 months to reply to the NRO request for updating of the old SAMOS paper; and we must also concede that the final COMOR paper was not a manageable package.

2. In our estimation, Dr. McMillan's recommendation to the Chairman as contained in the 3d paragraph of his forwarding memorandum is quite out of order. The penultimate sentence of the 3d paragraph on the first page of the attachment is typical of several instances of chip-on-the-shoulder comments which NRO has made in the past. For some reason, it has been difficult to grasp what NRO really wants in the way of requirements and guidance. At which point we might observe that the NRO consultant was invited to all of the many sessions needed to produce D-13 and he attended the majority of them. At any point he could have helped guide us. In any event, the statement that "...the NRO has no recourse other than to make them" seems to be contrary to the spirit of "interface."

3. The question of jurisdictional jealousy would not worry us so much if confined to an occasional reminder to the intelligence family not to become too involved in operations. However, it has been a recurring and quite bitter bug-a-boo over too many months. In this one paper, it crops up in paragraph 2 on the second page where we are told not to concern ourselves with such matters as swath width; it is emphasized again in paragraph 3b of Tab B; again in 3d of the same tab; and once more in paragraphs 5 and 6 of Tab C which deals with SIGINT sensors. Particularly with reference to the first instance cited above, where we talk of swath width, method of data recovery, reliability, etc; we have too often been at an impasse with NRO in trying to explain that COMOR requires knowledge of the capability of collection systems if it hopes to task the variety of available capabilities with appropriate targets.

4. The paper contains, of course, a number of substantive points with which we could disagree but these should receive exhaustive study before they can be commented on fairly. The anomaly of the paper is contained in Tab B. Although NRO has protested vigorously that we have not given enough guidance, Tab B actually contains some very helpful information. The unfortunate feature is that all of these comments regarding uniform criteria and outlining for us some realistic research and development limitations could have been made known to COMOR at a much earlier date. Conceivably, they could have been provided to COMOR at the outset to guide it in forming its program, certainly the NRO consultant could have provided such guidance as D-13 developed. Parenthetically, it is unfortunate that NRO could not have reserved these quite helpful comments until it arrived at the 2 CIA papers which were published as USIB-D-41.14/31 and USIB-D-41.14/32. These were more complete and should have evoked better comments than could be provided in the summary, USIB-D-41.14/28.

5. Another example of the type of misunderstanding which seems to have existed between NRO and COMOR is typified by the frequent comment to the effect that certain paragraphs are not appropriate or necessary in a requirements document. The COMOR exercise was to produce a long-range planning paper as well as a requirements document. For this reason and because it would have to go to USIB for approval, it was essential to include in it as much background thinking as possible without getting too deeply into the complexities of research and development. However, as stated above, acquaintance with present system characteristics is essential and some knowledge of what may be over the hill is also necessary to future planning.

6. Although this is skirting a substantive question, the frequent use of the word, "quantitative," is bound to raise questions. We who have so far read the paper are unable to figure exactly what is desired, in some instances we can make a good guess as to what is wanted, but in other cases the word is either used inappropriately or it is a mystery as to why it was used. The most glaring example of the latter is contained in Tab D wherein NRO comments on USIB-D-41.14/30, specifically Tabs B, C, and D. These are 3 DOD papers and they talk in terms of numbers of targets, frequency of coverage, response time, and contain those other details which NRO would seem to desire in every paper.

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General Relationships with NRO

7. In mid-July 1962, NRO began officially to seek interface with USIB. Anticipating USIB action on this, the Chairman, COMOR in August orally invited NRO to send a representative to COMOR meetings. [redacted] attended the 16 August meeting of COMOR. On 18 September 1962, USIB approved the forwarding of COMOR documents to NRO and attendance at COMOR of a consultant and observer from NRO. The COMOR records show that beginning with the meeting of 8 September NRO actually began receiving minutes and formal agenda beginning with the meeting of 20 September. A member of NRO has attended the majority of meetings since that time. In commenting further on this attendance, it may be appropriate to note that whereas in the Acting Chairman's memorandum to Director, National Reconnaissance Office of 18 September 1962 it was specified that the designee be the "Deputy for Operations," the most consistent attendee has not enjoyed this position. [redacted] has normally been the observer. He has no title and is in the Office of the Deputy Director for Technical Services.

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8. [redacted] position may have something to do with troubles we have experienced in getting action from NRO. He has been extremely cooperative but has impressed us with the fact that he has very little authority. He can never commit himself to NRO action, even something as apparently innocuous and integrally related to COMOR business as a statement on how long it takes to manufacture an ARGON package.

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9. In vindication of [redacted] participation and his willingness to help, he has briefed COMOR quite frequently or arranged for briefings of interest to the Committee. Since May, for instance, he has provided a weekly briefing on both photo and SIGINT satellite activity. Seemingly, he just hits a brick wall when such policy matters as clearances and apparently even ARGON are concerned.

10. The procrastination of NRO in providing clearances is well known. On 21 January 1963, Mr. Reber made this a matter of record in a memorandum to the DCI.

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(S) NRO Office, and particularly with [redacted]

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have not been good in regard to COMOR business. [] NRO has and has had for quite some time a representative on the COMOR and has regularly received all documentation. However, he is not in a position to adequately serve COMOR's needs, not because he is incompetent, but because of limitations placed upon him, a particular case in point is that in July 1961 or thereabout, the Chairman was briefed on two or three new forms of the satellite photographic programs. At that time

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[] inquired what of the information I received would COMOR need. I responded that they needed the same information which I had received. It was only last Thursday, 17 January, that COMOR was finally briefed on a program which is to take place on 24 February and for which COMOR's requirements are needed for 1 February. We intend to meet this deadline but it is doubtful we will be able to do as well as we might had we had more time. Security was supposed to be the reason why COMOR could not have been briefed. I, and COMOR, reject this.

11. A prime example of NRO's high-handed method of dealing with our cooperation occurred in the case of COMOR-D-61/1. At the request of NRO, COMOR identified types of targets for photographic reconnaissance and broke this down according to the need for "surveillance" or "technical intelligence." This basic paper went to NPIC which did an exhaustive study culminating in classification of objectives according to the resolution needed to satisfy the intelligence requirement; i. e., []

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This study was sent to NPIC 28 August 1962. At the time COMOR began work on D-13, 7 months later, reference was made to this paper. NRO said it had read it but had paid it no particular heed "because it had not come from USIB."

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12. ARGON has always been a source of trouble between COMOR and NRO. In the present 1964 schedule, NRO has announced that 4 ARGON packages will be available by June 1964. However, COMOR has never been consulted as to whether there is a requirement for additional ARGON photography. COMOR could only speculate that NRO regarded it as prudent to have these at hand in case of the failure of both 9058A and 9059A. This speculation

[] of how long it takes to manufacture a package

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and a request to the NRO consultant that COMOR be advised on this. This request has been denied.